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RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000946

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SITUATION REPORT FOR DRC - OCTOBER 29, 2008,
AS OF 9:00 PM CENTRAL AFRICAN TIME (GMT + 1)

Protection of American citizens

Note: All times Kinshasa (GMT + 1) unless otherwise indicated

-- EAC convened at 9:00 am to discuss deteriorating security situation in eastern DRC. EAC recommended continued travel ban to eastern Congo and restricted movement to essential meetings only, and will continue to monitor the situation. (Kinshasa 945)

-- Following warden message issued at 11:30 am:
"American citizens in the town of Goma and surrounding areas should evaluate their security situation and consider departing. Fighting in the area is likely to continue."

-- Draft Travel Warning message recommending suspension of all but essential travel to eastern DRC is submitted to Department at 2:00 pm. Clearance process underway; issuance expected this afternoon Washington time.

-- At 3:00 pm RSO recommended evacuating USG staff from Goma. Charge d'Affaires concurred and employees were contacted immediately. All USG personnel (two direct hire, two contractors) were in Rwanda by 5:07 pm. RSO's, CDA/DCM embassies Kinshasa and Kigali in frequent phone contact to coordinate evacuation.

-- Second warden message issued at 5:00 pm: "US Embassy staff are evacuating Goma. American citizens are urged to leave the city by any means available."

Citizens of other countries

-- Canadian embassy in Kinshasa took steps to evacuate Canadian citizens to Rwanda.

-- The French embassy reported it has evacuated its personnel to Rwanda.

-- Meeting held at 5:00 pm at OCHA headquarters in Goma to discuss UN humanitarian and OCHA contingency plans for North Kivu.

-- As of 6:00 pm UN did not plan to evacuate personnel but instead confine all personnel to MONUC compounds in Goma. Bukavu, DRC, some 100 kms. south of Goma and capital of the province of South Kivu, is the designated evacuation point if evacuation becomes necessary.

Political, military developments

-- Goma report for October 28-29 (Kinshasa 944) contains latest information on developments as of 10:00 am on October 29.

-- Charge attended briefing by Foreign Minister Alexis Thambwe

Mwamba at 10:00 am on his meeting yesterday with President Kagame. Thambwe Mwamba stated that Kagame had turned President Kabila's proposal for a summit in Dar-es-Salaam and that he would not discuss the CNDP as it is an internal Congolese matter.

-- Thambwe Mwamba also confirmed the DRC would attend the Tripartite Plus meeting in Kigali November 11-12.

-- At 12:30 pm SRSg Doss called Charge to inform of "credible reports" of RDF APC's crossing into the DRC at Kivumba. Charge met with DATT and ORA. He also called Kinshasa's officer in Goma and DCM Kigali with request to seek greater information. Interlocutors were unable to confirm reports.

-- At 12:45 pm Charge called French DCM to ask if he knew about RDF APC's. He did not; he called back later to say French diplomatic and military staff in Goma had heard similar reports.

-- At 1:15 pm poloff Goma reported that FARDC's 82nd integrated brigade (IB) had abandoned its positions at Kivumba and was retreating with family members and large numbers of IDP's towards Goma.

-- Charge attempted to reach SRSg Alan Doss at 1:40 pm. When unable to do so he then called Brigadier General I. B. Quartey, MONUC's acting force commander, to request more information. General Quartey confirmed FARDC retreat and stated that MONUC alone had been left defending Kivumba. He was unable to confirm reports of Rwandan APC's. Charge informed USG interlocutors of conversation with Quartey via e-mail.

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-- Weekly Goma conference call held at 3:00 pm between AF/C, USAID Washington, Embassy Kinshasa's Goma office, and Embassy Kigali. Major events reviewed.

-- Ambassador (currently in DC) called charge at 3:45 pm per Charge's message at 2:45. Charge briefed ambassador on all developments.

-- Charge called UK ambassador at 4:54 pm to discuss evacuation of UK personnel from Goma and British efforts to achieve a ceasefire in Goma. Ambassador states that UK ambassador to Rwanda will demarche GOR.

-- Charge called Alan Doss at 5:10 pm. Doss confirmed that he had spoken twice with Nkunda who had agreed to a cease-fire as long as FARDC does not renew fighting.

-- Charge called Tim Shortley at 5:36 to discuss latest developments and A/S Frazer's trip to Kinshasa tomorrow.

-- Charge discusses security for A/S Frazer with presidential advisor Marcellin Cishambo at 6:49 pm. Cishambo states that in the unlikely (his view) event of disturbances in Kinshasa a helicopter will be made available for A/S and her party to proceed from the airport to office of the president.

-- Conference call is held at 7:00 pm between Charge, A/RSO, DS, AF/C and Ops Center's Crisis Management Staff. Kinshasa agrees that EAC will discuss "reverse trip wires" for the return of USG employees to Goma at EAC meeting Friday. Charge states that travel ban into Kinshasa by USG employees is not warranted at this time.

-- At 7:30 pm Charge is briefed by Operations Center on Secretary Rice's call at 12:04 EDT to President Kagame.

-- Charge calls Alan Doss at 8:05 pm who reports that what appear to be renegade FARDC soldiers have violated the ceasefire near Goma, shooting at the CNDP. Other FARDC soldiers have attacked civilians and looted inside Goma. Doss has given instructions to shoot would-be attackers. He is also reaching out to Nkunda to request that he not end the ceasefire and to the GDRC to ask that every effort be made to respect the ceasefire.

